

LITHUNIA CUSTOMS

Greetings:

Men sometimes kiss the extended hand of women in greeting, and good friends may kiss cheeks and embrace.

To introduce a man, one uses *ponas* (Mr.) before the last name; the female term is *ponia* (Mrs.) or *panelė* (Miss).

The most common terms for greeting are *Laba diena* (Good day), *Labas rytas* (Good morning), *Labas vakaras* (Good evening), and *Viso gero* (Good-bye). Friends use the more informal *Labas* (Hello), *Viso* (Bye), and *Iki* (Later). *Sveikas* (for a man), *Sveika* (for a woman), and *Sveiki* (for a group)—all roughly meaning “How are you?”—are friendly ways to say hello. Urban Lithuanians do not greet strangers passing on the street.

Gestures:

It is impolite to talk with one's hands in one's pockets. Eye contact is vital during conversation.

People sometimes extend the thumb upward to express approval, but verbal communication is preferred. Using the hands during or instead of conversation is not uncommon although it is less formal. One avoids shaking hands through a doorway.

Chewing gum in formal situations is not appropriate.

Holidays:

Official public holidays include New Year's Day, Independence Day (16 Feb.), Restoration of Lithuania's Statehood (11 Mar.), Mother's Day (first Sunday in May), Anniversary of the Coronation of Grand Duke Mindaugas of Lithuania (6 July), National Day of Hope and Mourning (1 Nov.), and Christmas (25–26 Dec.). Families traditionally have a 12-course, meatless meal on Christmas Eve (*Kūčios*). The Day of Hope and Mourning, also known as All Souls' Day, is a day to remember and honor the dead. For the pre-Lent *Užgavėnės*, people dress in costumes and children go from house to house asking for treats. Easter is celebrated with family. St. John's Day (24 June) marks the advent of summer. Various local festivals are held throughout the year.

Birthdays are hosted by the birthday person, and jubilee years (every 10th year) are very special.

Name days honoring the saint after which a person is named may also be important celebrations.